

SHARDS OF GLASS

A book of poems by Scott Whittaker

GHOSTS

There is a haunted house
upon asylum hill
where souls of days gone past
waiting and watching wonder still
for their spirits to be free at last.

The creaking moan
of doors locked tight,
the blindness of bars
on the windows,
dark curtains to keep out the light
no watch to tell today from tomorrow.

Counting the rosary
on the links of their chains
they pray for their night to end
and with the sun, the spells undone
that they might live again.

Morning will come
and night naught but mind
sleepers will awaken,
but not for the ones
we have left behind,
their dreams remain
despite the day
the ghosts
that we have forsaken.

SHE AROSE

She arose
overnight,
turgid with dawn
and dew,
lips like petals
pursed,
expectantly.
An American Beauty.
I would not have you
plucked as bud
or with thorn
pricked, blood
drawn, before
the flower enjoys
the bloom of day.

APPALACHIAN TRAIL

Untold people have passed
this way, along
this well worn path.
Others eyes have seen
this and that.
Others have done
what I too
have done.
Some left
their mark, some a clue
only. Many more
like ghosts gone
by; casting only shadow.
Yet each has lent
their feet
to the treading
down the untamed
dirt
and went on
before me
where surely I too
must one day go.
Leaving behind
only the lasting
impressions I made
on this earth.

AUTUMNAL EQUINOX

Mom's been drawing the blinds
a little earlier every day.
By four the last spot of sun
has left
the dog behind.
Where it used to dally, staying
late after dinner,
playing hide and seek
the shadows are now it.
All-in, All-in, All-in-free
we race each other
to home base
through the leaves
which crunch, crunch, crunch
beneath our feet.
Down the road
lights come on, one by one
early porch lights, headlights,
lamps on poles, casting
pinkish pools.
We splash in them
trying to avoid the dark places
in between.
Through windows glow TV's
throwing their light to the sky
in mockery of the moon.
One day, I know
I'll be older; drawing the blinds myself
to ward off the night.
But for a moment I will linger
on the last few steps longer
to catch a glimpse of the stars.

FOR WARREN

The wind is dying
but it has not lost
its voice. Sings
the wolf where it roams
alone. We all start out
together, but end
in our own
way. Down the road
I will leave you
or you me. We may go up
in smoke stolen
from the flames. The shadows wait
for the fire to wane.
Its what we do
with the time
that remains
and what we sing
with the voice we have
left
that matters.

HERE AND NOW

Now, a summer field
lays open, a golden
September, ripe
beneath the lengthening
light; stretching on and on.
We have not noticed
the waning sun,
ignored the first turning
leaves and cooling
breath upon the air.
There is no spring
or fall for us,
flowering or picking.
We purple with the twilight
and fruit before the frost,
eternal for the moment
between earth and sky...

Here Now, There Then

These days,
these names,
carved in stone;

mute
and immutable.

As if frozen in,
permanent winter.

I was here
once. I did not know
then, I would be
again, but I am.

Perhaps
for no more.

Who knows what
winds will carry me
or where? It grows
colder, that alone is sure.

A day warmer
may dawn missing me
and somewhere will lie
my stone to mark
this waypoint
of my crossing,
connecting
the here, now and
the there, then.

I am

An early April peeper sings
out its lonesome, solo song.
One voice against the gathering night
that goes on and on and on.
I am here, I am here, I am here
it says, announcing that it is
and all that matters is to be
alive on a night like this.

Below the Ice

Ice on a still pond
frozen, like sleep, belies
a watery world of dreams beneath.

Rainbow's Gold

Do you know that I dream?

A dream of you
with I turned inward,
I see you.

A chimera,
like stars upon the sea,
or rainbow's gold.

O, Morpheus,
I pray to awaken
and wrest my dream
to light ,
or shy of that
I may give myself
up to sleep forever
so that I may dream
of you again.

Reckless Abandon

Throw caution
to the wind.
Let it fill my sails.
I am a sea
without shore,
without thought,
for where I maybe
cast tomorrow;
whether rock or storm.
I wish only to ride
this heaving wave
and dance to
the sirens song.

The Golden Hour

May I be this day,
this golden hour,
before the gates
of night
shining brightly,
my voice, the wind,
singing strongly
and my sight
uplifted to see
all the colors of earth
where they meet the sky.
In that moment when
I can be no more
alive than I am
right now,
let me be this
this day,
this golden hour.

The Old Road

I am an old road,
ruttled, worn and weather-wise;
hardscrabble and dirt brown.

My name is now
forgotten. Once I was
going somewhere.
Today, it's neither here
nor there; a dead end.

I wait and wonder,
dozing and doting,
under winter snows
for the plow.

The Night Commuters

The shades of dusk descend
with all the colors of the desert;
sand, blue sky, blood red.
Then they appear, the children
like ghosts, swathed in white
from the empty quarter. They come
fleeing the hell left behind them;
the Lords Resistance Army.
They haunt the towns
each night, gathering
to themselves for refuge
against the dark rain.
The night commuters,
bus stations, churches,
grave yards and hospitals,
their only homes.
With the dawn they are gone
like morning mist
and bad dreams
to hide wherever shadows go
during the day.

TEMPORAL

When I was leaving
you were still
a seed, yet to be.
When May I was budding
you were just nascent,
in springs early morning sun.
Now I am in fall
late afternoon;
the suns long rays
dapple me with shadow.
And here you are in full,
sunny, early June, bloom;
your petals pursed
expectantly like lips
waiting for the bees kiss.
While I have gone to seed,
left to fallow;
wild and unweeded.

Temporal,
we could never be any more.
We share the same earth,
but not the same equinox

I AM A PARTICLE. I AM A WAVE.

One day I will return
to my quantum state;
neither here, nor there.
A complex wave.
Contours of constant probability,
defying prediction
of such conjugate variables.
Am I matter?
Am I spirit?
When my body is at rest
where is my energy?
It will have been
translated into this closed system
and become what I have done;
having changed this plane
even if only in the most
subtle of ways.
It goes on and on
even after my cause
has long been forgotten.

When my spirit
is thus quantifiable,
having irradiated away
and given off
its valance,
then you will know
all that I am
all that I was
and all I will ever be...
and I will be gone
having crashed upon the beach
and returned to the sea.

The Guillotine

How small is a moment?

This instant has
already happened,
before you
know it.

We are forever
living the past.

The blade falls.

I hear it
slice the air.

I feel it rumble
like thunder.

My heart thumps
between the tock
and tick in the space
between the hands
of the clock.

My time
counts down
in seconds split
fine as hair.

But I never feel
this second

I never know
this minute
in motion stopped,
when I am done,
and looking heavenward.

The blade holds
this still life scene
in reflection.

This Side of Gone

I live at my own latitude,
an arctic circle of the soul.
Where neither sun nor I
ever reach midheaven,
in the shadow of the pole.

Mine is the land of the noonday moon
and seeping horizon's twilight tide.
Night a tunnel through to day
which I must see to the other side.

It's a hypnogogic sea of dreams.
I grasp at passing bergs to float upon
But Titanics sinking feeling provides no purchase
With which to stay this side of gone.

WE LIVE FOR THIS

We live for this, being
here and now. Where
the lines converge
in this special moment.
We leave the shadows
behind and return
from the effloresce of twilight
to the embers of day.
In this Elysian light
we are radiant with the sun.
Reflecting splendor
like the myriad facets
of icicles in the eves.
At our feet lay sequins fallen
from the hems of angels passing.

We may find the cache
of heavens earthly promise
but it be temporal and elusive.
The shades of night still
will descend. They reach
out to us through the trees
with their long fingers.
It is time to go,
but this is why
we are here.

The Recitation

Little people pray
with the Book open
across their lap;
children really. Seated
below stern eyes downcast;
closed. They rock and recite
empty words, just sound .
Just an echo, like a shadow.
Where is your Lord?
In the east?
Where is your Lord?
In the sky?
Like fair Orion rising,
in the minds eye, otherwise
naught, but
a collection of stars.
Most surely there is a sign
in that idol worship and incense.
I believe, I must,
for I have nothing else
what matters.
We are given guidance
to the lost, to the end.
Pieces to a puzzle incomplete,
ours is to try
and put it all in sense.
Ours fate is to repeat
this time, to repeat this line,
in the name of god,
in the name of god.

Family Tree

This ash is old
that leaves with me,
though roots lie deep
in dusty earth.

Long forgotten
and gone to seed
may yet still bear
wild fruit in spring.

Dream Time

The elders tell (a tale)
that we arose
from a dream
time, before reckoning
of day or direction.
When we lived only
simply, in the long
now. Present before
we put boxes around things;
before all the names.
A time of smoke and haze
and of sleep beneath
half lidded eyes,
under the sun.
The moon being
The only divider, that
and death.
By these we knew
the passing of days
and the only sign
we were, of course,
not really
dreaming.

The Effigy

The doll lies
lifeless; eyes
seeing nothing,
looking elsewhere.
Its complexion plastic,
perfect, perhaps
for centuries. It ages,
but never grows old.
Limbs akimbo,
articulated but still
without a will
to manipulate them.
No, the prime mover did
not breath it to life.
It stands empty,
only a model
to whatever may be
and a reminder
of what we will all
one day become.
Its no wonder
those eyes send
shivers down our spines.

Gate

All paths are as a labyrinth,
circles within circles
around a common center;
each its own
collocated orbit
upon which we turn,
seeking the sun, revolving
about another still.

And so on...

Sometimes moving closer it seems
is further away, yet,
in this way, we may come to find
there never really were lines at all,
only a rootless wandering;
solitary steps forward, forming
an illusion of coming and going,
of which we are otherwise unaware.

What appears at first
to be nothing more than dead ends
are our footsteps folding back upon themselves;
going a different direction
but the same way as before,
just ten thousand more mantras
marked by the mala.

We are our own Ouroboros;
a shadow of ourselves we meet
after completing the circuit
and coming again to the guru once more.

It cannot be seen in reaching
for some manner of conclusion;
wherever you are
you have always been
at some point upon your trajectory.
When you think have finally arrived
you find you
were already there
all along.

Antipodal

Someone once said,
that people are a partially
open door, standing ajar,
but am I going to
open or am I becoming
more closed?

I wait to carry you
away, as I cross
the threshold; one step
in and one out.
Am I coming
or am I going?

The light falls hard
across my back
and warmth lays
behind me; nothing
but darkness awaits
my path ahead.
I give up, packing,
and shoulder my baggage,
as I lean into the wind
I shut the door.

Awaken

You are not the you
that you think you are.

Know that
you are the spirit made
manifest. The eyes of light,
the heart of darkness,
the images mirror.

You are the doppelganger
that you imagine,
on the far side of the sun.

Look out
from within
and see yourself
awaken.

Family, Fences, Farm and Fields

Down on the family
farm, come winter,
it's a time to mend
fences, fallen from
too much summer
wanderings.

The fertile fields
too far now to stray
through snows deep banks,
the livestock stays
within our bosom
and home.

The men rise later,
with the sun
the women too;
tending their knitting.
Coffee and breath cloud
like the weather.

We take our time
talking; telling
tales of summers high
pastures gone,
there isn't much more
to do, so we work
together on our fences
and stoke the hearth
of heart again.

FINDING YOURSELF

You say you
are searching
for yourself,
but you are not
behind you,
in your shadow,
in the past.
Why would you be
hiding
from your own eyes?
Might you be
somewhere else?
Where in the world
then do you look?
In the mirror?
Behind the curtain?
Or, are you lost
like Waldo,
amid the chaos?
Or are you the you
who you are yet
to be? No.

You are
where you are,
in the center
of the universe.
Look there.

Given

I have so little; you,
all I have and all I have
I have been
given. A hand me down
past; tomorrow
a holey, empty pocket
and nothing in it
for you. Nothing to give
when you cry
from want. No dreams
to share,
when we pray and sleep
and hope to. No,
all I have for you is me
and that is nowhere
near enough for you,
to eat, to dream, to hope
for. Something else must give,
something else given; all I have.

So I give you
away to another; One by chance
who can give you what I cannot
and never will, nor wishes
will make it
so, I give up
the only good thing I have
ever been given.

You will never know
what this meant or why
but I know you will be happy
and free and have
what I could never have;
a life enough
to share with another;
but this, this I *can* give.

I see you off
the train as it leaves
the station. I wave
good bye and cry
a little tear, turning
my head
for the emptiness
of the parking lot.
No one looks back.
You are on your way.

I did all
that I could;
gave all, I could have
given.

Krystal Nacht.

You see them sometimes
during the day;
in your sidelong furtive glances
and rearview mirrors:
the ghosts of spirits
freed from their bottles,
now lying smashed
upon the sidewalk,
amid the empty trash cans
tossed and left. Aside
broken homes with broken windows,
like mouths with missing teeth.
No one lives down here anymore
on these dead ends,
these cul-de-sacs on one way streets.
You can see them, if you look. Hard
against the concrete and cold roads
they glint of fools gold
with the solidity of stars at night
whose light still touches
our eyes, though they have long ago
ceased to shine.
What once was whole
now a thousand little pieces.
They shine now only in reflection.

The morning turns them out
as they stumble and wander
about town. They blend in
amid the blur of rush hour;
blowing down the road
with the Styrofoam cups,
stale coffee and white dust
of powdered donuts.
In that bright light, cold steps
sobered by the noon day sun,
they look less like ghosts
and more like you and me.

Though you see them sometimes....

The Second Blooming of the Rose

Only a constant gardener would note
the second blooming of the rose.
After tempestuousness springs,
 burgeoning virgin bud,
 the turmid reds brown
beneath the relentless torridness of summer.
When the remains dust to nothing
and it appears that this years
spirit has gone and moved on
and all the other annuals
 have too passed.
The rose only is resurrected
 from its dormancy
resplendent against the green
when none but the most tenacious
of efflorescence remain steadfast.
In this time of change
When the rose returns,
it is as if a sign, a hope,
 that incorporeality
is naught but a temporary phase,
such as the faces of the moon
and that one day again
we too will rebloom anew
 though it be, perhaps,
just before being picked
 by the hand of Fall.

PUSH AND PULL

The tide rides in.
Boats and buoys
rise in its wake,
flotsam findings left,
on the neap of night,
found upon the strand
come the spring of morn.
We stride between
the sun and waves
amid the reach of the sea.

The tide rides out.
Ropes at their moorings
fall slack in ebb.
Life finds itself
stranded between crags
of constant change;
maybe to be swept away
towards the infinite,
distant horizon.

Who knows
the whys of it all?
What is the cause
and where the effect
in this cycle of chaos?
No one can,
save the man in the moon
sailing the silent heaven
over the sea, above the sky
and out beyond the clouds.

Realms Beyond the Night

So few see
outside the window
and through
the opacity;
up and down
where the streets,
passages and back
alleys converge.
As unseen as maps
in the night. Time drifts
here in persistence
of memory. Signs, symbols
omens, stop and yield,
flashing signals caution
the lost, the blind
and sleeping alike.
Another plane
superimposed
upon the waking
world. Gone by
day, dew and mists;
a chimera
so few see.

September 11th

A pall of darkness is upon us
veiling this moment of morning.
The first night of many last days,
that struck at our heart without warning.
Tonight the stars themselves are still
and silence ripped from our tongues.
Everything seems so inconsequential now
as we wait for word that never comes.
It's as if our plow shares have turned against us
and truth itself now lies
beneath a pile of steel and stone
over which only Old Glory flies.
Clouds and grey rain may gather and burst
and mighty pillars fall
but when the thunder and lightening descend
the storm breaks upon us all.

SLEEPING BEAUTY

Sleeping beauty
who would have dreamt
that you would fall so
asleep; never again
to awaken?

Why would one,
of blood so blue
and skin as fair
as bone china,
stately and demure,
taste the temptation
of the illicit apple?

Surely some spell
cast you in its shadow
and embraced you
in a cold kiss, unbroken.

Lost to this place,
and eclipsed even in day
you heedlessly, headlong
stumbled through doors,
crossing thresholds unseen,
not knowing
that some accidentally lead
only to exits.

The Empty Glass Full

Delicate flutes, these crystal lives.
Holding the light, the facets cast
the dancing spectra of seraphim,
all about us. Twinkling notes,
we glasses ring,
in sympathetic resonance
and higher harmonics
never heard by ear.

Appearing perfectly pure
yet, infinitely fragile still -
whether creation
or through rough use
we may never know -
possessing of slight unseen faults.
One day we may simply shatter,
smashing into myriad
small sharp shards
scattering our contents
everywhere.

The Nightmare Inn

At the end of days
when I let go and loose myself
to the null of slumber,
I often find my mind returning
to a somewhat familiar, yet foreign place
like some forgotten ancestral manor
or a broken-down nightmare inn.
Here it seems I am eternally meant
to restlessly roam along these long halls
veiled in featureless umbral shades
and passed numberless rooms
always searching out
for what, I can never find.

Echoes like memories nearly evoked,
voices or the winds, seep
through walls as thin as reeds
and breathes the night between the blinds
drawn and barely shut. Doors gape
spill forth gloom. Inside,
unmade beds left to lay
in, wait and vacant
closets stores of years and bones;
their skeletons now gone. Here and there
the past left behind, odd clues:
a coat hanger,
a razor, rusty, by the bath
a bible, yellowed pages missing,
an indecipherable note.

Down and around winding stairs
await fathomless chasms
or which lead me forwards,
on upward paths lost to the night.
While some stop open, though
many more rooms shut fast;
locking out as much as keeping in....
and no amount of knocking
knows response,
perhaps save the low murmurs and moans
of infinite melancholy.

In this place I am naught
but sight and sound.
My footfalls stir the ghosts to wake
from the dust they have since become
after mourning too long
upon yesterday's regrets. Scattering them
like so much smoke,
they reform again off in dark recesses
fit to menace me at a distance;
too afraid to draw nearer.

A broken clock ticks out slow time,
the beat of a tell-tale heart,
whose hands hold steady
still, correct twice each day.
And the glass in frames which once reflected
their silver plate turned pale and blind,
as cataracts over aged eyes,
windows opaque upon a closed soul,
I see as look through these, my shape
going through the myriad motions
of all the arcane minutiae
with which our days are toiled.

And as I reflect
upon this stranger in a strange land,
deep within I fear that waking life
is really the chimera, the dream,
and that my true being is always here,
in this oubliette
on the other side of the mirror.

The Stones

The stones stand, still
like soldiers at attention.
Their bright marble, uniform,
polished and luminous as medals;
purpled hearts bound in gold
and laid to rest
in ornate wooden cases, sealed
and left to wait aside
eternities passing
or the next time
the trumpet is played.

They bear the dust of days there,
the beating suns of each rotation
the heat, the cold and every tempest
that bring more shrouds of white
and the umbrellas beneath
the crying of heaven
as more amass to take their watch
among the nights of forlorn moons.

Memoria of what was, once.
Not names, nor any number
for such are countless
beyond all the stars we see,
but rather a being, a story all
whose telling is told less and less often.
Until all that is left of what remains
are hard reminders,
the row upon row upon row,
of stark and silent stones,
the bones of the earth
made bare.

The Suicide

You certainly put the period
on the exclamation point
of your life, when you took that
big leap of little faith.

Why?

What drove you over
the thin, little edge?
You left that question hanging
like a dangling participle.
Had you reached the end
of your rope, only
to tie the knot
and not hang on?

I don't know
you yet I saw you
there, eyes skyward
as if in prayer,
robed in pure white
and your heart borne bare;
a mute eulogy
to the finality of it all
and bringing renewed meaning
to a dead end.

THE WAKE OF THE ROSE

Oh, what purpose the rose?
Upon reflection, it bears to mind,
 above all else, love.
Fragrant like no other
bloom. In its riotous color and variety,
 we get entangled
having forsaken more sober awareness
of all its thorny profusion;
 nary seen at first blush.
Such a poor token
this, for life's great calling
its far too short in bloom, it seems;
floral fireworks bursting forth
soft petals, just as ash before the wind
borne away to brown, to dust, to leave
light remains like palls of smoke
which cling at skeletal fingers,
 lingering
long after scents are gone.
And so what, to reason? To being?
What meaning do we need
ascribe the primal chaos, this madness
that lies in the wake of the rose?
It matters only to wither and pass on
the seed of its longing
for another spring.
It gives up of itself.
It was.
Is this not enough?

The Wireless

I hear a faint radio somewhere
tuning in a distant station
Sometimes the signal falters,
fading in and out.
Other times it finds the frequency,
reception locked in.
What is the receiver
without the transmitter?
Naught but a black box of noise.
Where is the message
without the medium?
A cry out in the night
lost between here
and gone before there.
When the air is clear
we can catch the skip
from some far off source.
We can turn on
and tune in the wireless
but the sender
may never be known.

To The Manor Born

He who believes
God favors him
and smiles upon him
and all his correct and worthy efforts,
would do well and always
to consider the child
born with no star upon him
and to whom the kings bestow
only empty purses,
stench and strife.

Where is He
who hears as he cries
out in the pain of night,
“Father, why
have you forsaken me”?
And who, under the merciless
sun of morning,
is saved
with eyes heavenward,
by being lowered still
unto the earth?

Yes, truly
think upon that.
And spend some time
giving good work
to pull one’s self upward
by your own bootstrap.
Then you will believe, pray
and be thankful for
the Great die
did not roll once more turn
for you.

Toe up

It wasn't like he was going
to be using them anymore,
those boots. Meant for walking,
his feet were going nowhere
shoes were needed,
now he was toe up.

So I found myself
wearing a dead man's
shoes, still new.
It felt funny,
though the fit was fine,
to be wearing one of the last
earthly remains
of one departed;
he having taken the final step.

I wondered, would I
begin to walk like him?
Would I lean, a little bit
in the way he leaned?
For each sole echoed
his soul, in its uneven wear
from the way he walked,
as if his life were somehow
recorded in the bottom
of those boots; the clip-clop
of leather against the hard
ground, leaving little bits
of themselves everywhere.

Each step taking one
that hadn't been taken in life.
That's why we always only hear
the footsteps of ghosts
but never see them.

Yesterday's Ash

Sundays are as if a funeral.
We lay to final rest
what was and what
might have been.
For what its worth
they are no more;
choice and chance
irrevocably gone.
Less real than dreams
now. Only their effects
remain to remind us
that they were even ever here.
For the Gods themselves too
must, from time to time,
set aside their stone and scythe
weary in the toil
of wearing the yoke
of what is bygone.
How much more so we?
Then let us set the pyre alight
and burn this day down,
and make yesterday ash.

Secondhand Goods

You had given up
the ghost, leaving us, early
one morning, your sole
possessions held dear
but no goodbye.
Nothing but bric-a-brac
to anyone else;
the body of one's life:
nameless photos of faded faces,
keepsake tchotchkes, such as glasses
from sundry states,
confirmation that you had been
somewhere once,
a scratched watch
which no longer winds,
transition objects, an old doll
that you loved as a little girl,
that walked and talked,
to whom you bequeathed
your fears...your secrets
borne and kept silent
all these years, but
whose eyes no longer open
and now missing a hand.
Odds and ends all,
connections of meaning
missing. You
were these things, they you,
broken and valueless.
Just so much more junk
to see gone.

Boats Free Upon the Tide

Shorelines rising tide;
seaweed upon the strand,
staining black the rocks
between ebb and neap.
Boats lie moored here, alee,
Some floating, others weighing
anchor. Buoyed
by the transverse waves,
whose sonance now
reaches my ears.
Who knew, the moons
subtle hand had pulled,
not only upon the gathering sea,
but lifted all the ships too,
so that one, alone,
silently slipped its reigns;
ironically freed
by gravities wake?
Ignorant were we,
racing in the spray
and swimming out
to those crafts there,
as our end.
We knew not,
that the knots had frayed
and that we, like it,
were adrift in the bosom
of the boundless sea.
Getting no closer,
yet further away
from home, we move in
an imperfect asymptote.
Unaware that our aim
too is loose, as we both
drift heedlessly
toward that place
where sea and sky
meet as one.

Charlie's Gone

I saw you last
in the days remaining
rays; cascading.

But when left alone
you somehow slipped
between the curtain
and the night.

Light as a child's
balloon above the fair.

I was not there
to hold you back;
I had let you go.

90 Degrees North

Somewhere lost,
alone at the last
latitude line between
me and one
final fate.

So cold, its hard
to know how to feel,
the degrees of distinction
become diffuse here.

I have left, nothing
but a tattered banner
and holey soles.

No more forward
movement to be had;
all paths lead south.
Nothing else stands
above or below
save me.

I had sought
to claim the world's end
only to find my own,
horizon a mirage of grey
fading to white.

So I find a place to call my summit

Too tired, to wait...
what comes here
but the setting sun
and death?

Though one day
and the moon
will rise, arise!
to find me once more
and in rolling back
the stone of night
look upon this
countenance again
cold and pitiless
frozen in time, forgotten
by God and men.

The Skipping Stone

I am, as if
a stone thrown
by some unseen hand
and skipped upon
the surface of the sea.
Each bounce ripples
where I touch
and there are places
I have not been.
In between,
I hang
in the air, in silent
breath held, anticipation
and hope of just how many
skips I will make
and just how far
I will fly.

Insidious Weeds

Oft baser fare
belies the sun
whither shines upon
one's seeming subject.
But in turning
to its darker shades,
where subtle nuance
is invariably cast,
a sidelong glance
is seen to that
from which the more virtuous
would more likely choose
to look away.

SURFACE INTERVAL

Weightless and effortlessly
falling through
the pressure group gradient,
past the thermocline
where any warmth once held in your heart
is quickly stripped away by the careless sea
and an unshakable chill seeps through your thin skin.

Density grows as the current drives you down
and tries to squeeze you into a smaller volume
of space than you otherwise occupy.
Bright bubbles of pain pop up from somewhere
inside your head, rolling around
looking to find a new equilibrium.

Safety becomes an uncomfortable distance
beyond the bright mirror above
as the world is closed off of sound,
all but the surging torrent
of blood and the exertion of exhalations,
racing each other to the surface
in a madcap dash, giggling as they go.

One's vision narrows to a point
where darkness begins to gather
at the edge and light falters,
failing to plumb any further;
A spectrum of color blue shifting to black.

All this will end in some way
either here and now
or on the other side,
as you reach the limits
of saturation;
a chest of airs breadth away. Let it go.

The deeper the dive
the slower the ascent
and the longer the surface interval
necessary for release
of the pent up stresses looking toward escape.

Ouroboros

And so...
the little circle just spins.
Lost in thought
about a floating point
operation on the hard problem;
considered calculating all the possible
permutations of sense and meaning
involved in pondering the infinite
Quantum navel.
Searching for the hidden bit
and its significance at the root
as the line approaches zero,
never resolved,
but rather reduced
to absurdity
and insanity, such a hungry process,
much like the Ouroboros
consuming itself,
and so
the little circle just spins.....

Entropy

Your budding may
be beautiful in this moment;
June, when days unfurl long and slow
and evenings fragrant
beneath an oblate moon,
soft and easy as beds of feathers
with gossamer sheets,
caressing your cheeks.
But there will come a fall
and behind it a winter
of sharp, icy mornings,
that impart an ache to one's bones,
and short, dark days
when the world is small,
the nights stiff with silence.
Then your rose will be naught,
petal-less and bare,
gangly sticks adorned with thorns.

The Other Shoe

Sole alone,
a left shoe lost;
torn and toe up
abandoned roadside.
Empty eyes agape, unseeing,
tongue still and silent
as to how its story ended
there at last.
Who knows
how many steps
it took ere time
and tide swept it
along its solitary route
or whither it goes
from here on out.

ALL THE FATHERS OF THE WORLD

I had rarely seen my father
happy. He'd pick me up
now and then, when he could
turn and see me; maybe
a night or two
a week and Sundays.

We'd play and I'd catch
his fastball smile on a pop fly
before he'd drive for home
and it would be gone;
deep in the outfield
after the seventh inning stretch.
Round and round I'd run
the bases at the days end
there, in overtime.

Afterwards, it was hide and seek.
And I would find him
beneath his work,
behind the papers,
or in front of the tube,
turned off.
He seldom took turns
or look for me, being "it",
until the grass grew too long
or after he'd stepped on the overlooked
Lego landmine,
carelessly mislaid.

Then he'd find me
hiding. He'd yell and call me
out, and soon I knew
to cover up even these clues
about where I was
and he found me less
often. Still hiding though
and when I looked, no one made it
home much anymore.

And just like that
the game was done. We'd somehow forgotten
to finish. And there was no more
over time after for Pops, for flies, or for finding....
His hands were too full to catch,
His garden overgrown, too small to run around,
and today's long hours short
what with all of yesterday's cares and what ifs
about tomorrow.

Children grow up and out, fast
expanding like balloon animals
shaped and twisted
like those by clowns at the circus
or meager magicians,
while parents deflate with the slow leak
of time, limp and going flat.

I think he thought he loved me, still
though emotions grow brittle as bones
stiff and arthritic with age,
until all that is left is ache and hurt,
and I incapable of seeing this, being
deaf and blind amid the roaring tumult
of life's longings.
And I thought I hated him
for what he was,
lost to me,
was what he'd once been;
he'd given up
everything for me.

I am a father now and I think I know
better. I find my own children,
growing too big and too heavy to raise
and my hands too full too often to hold theirs,
which mostly wave goodbye these days;
the time for playing always later.

And I see all the fathers of the world, in their eyes,
as they boldly soldier on alone,
the cognizance and constant worry
that this was always to be
a zero-sum game anyway.

THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE

Tw'as nigh upon dusk on an early winter's eve
when the last light of day turns all things to shadow,
I'd just returned home from upon my days leave
when I spied a figure amid the verge below.

A man, so I thought, as he had such a form,
slender and still at the edge of the wood;
where I knew for sure lay bramble and thorn.
he stood, watching me, where no man should.

The pall of night had veiled his face
and no features of his garment could I discern.
He just remained there fixed in place
not shying away nor attempting to turn.

How queer, I thought, this thing I saw
and I felt compelled for something to say,
as I feared he knew I saw him too
thus, could not leave our meeting unmarked this way.

"Watch yourself", I cried, to him
"Tis much ice about back yonder there!"
"You might see yourself go for a swim,
"if you do not watch out and take good care".

In response, he made no sign he'd heard.
He moved neither forward nor in retreat.
He made no sound nor uttered a word;
the silence and stillness he offered complete.

So I gathered my things and left in a hurry;
he seemed heedless of the hour or alarm.
If he did not care, then what would I worry?
He did not seem to offer me any harm.

So I left him there, as day became night
But upon backward glance, I saw him gone
Somehow, when not looking, he'd stepped out of sight
with no more a sound than the wind on the lawn.

I think back on my encounter often
When the snows of winter begin to fall
Why would a man have been there then
or was he even ever there at all?